

Six Simple Tips for Quick Bird Identification

Memorize the following six tips to help you to identify birds. With practice, these tips will come to mind automatically when you look at a new bird and will help you to remember its important features. If possible, write what you have seen in a notebook at the time of sighting.

1. What is the bird's relative size?

Compare the bird with other birds that are well known to you. If larger than a SPARROW, is it larger or smaller than a PIGEON? If larger than a PIGEON, is it smaller than a HAWK?

2. What is the shape and color of the bird's beak?

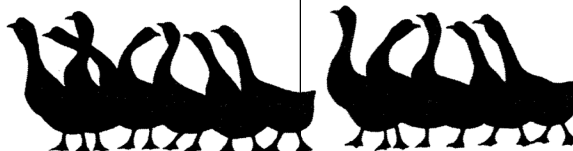
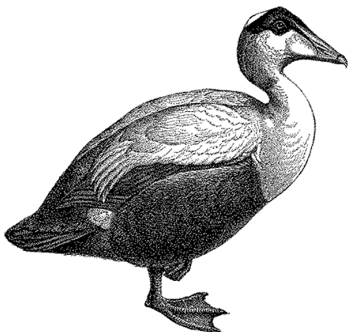
The shape of its beak is a guide to what it eats, classifying the type of bird it is. Is the beak short and round like that of a songbird or powerful and hooked like that of a hawk? What color is its beak? Many birds have blackish beaks but some are brightly colored.

3. What length and color are the bird's legs?

Does the bird have unusually long wading legs, short, perching legs, etc.? Are its legs a distinctive color?

4. What plumage colors or markings do you notice?

Bold markings, colors, or bars on the bird's wings, tail, breast, or above the eyes should be noted. Also note that in some bird species the males are brightly colored and the females tend to be camouflaged.



5. In what habitat do you see the bird?

The habitat in which the bird is seen is another important clue to the kind of bird it is. Is it in a garden, in water, in grassland, in the forest, etc.?

6. What is the bird doing?

Is it walking, hopping, wading, or swimming? Does it peck at the ground, probe in mud, or feed in a tree? Try to detail its behavior as closely as possible.

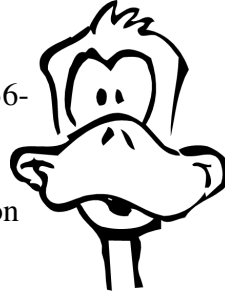
Often the details of a bird's structure, plumage, or behavior are soon forgotten, and the observer may spend much time trying to recall them. If these six points are remembered or noted at the time of the observation an analysis can be made later at leisure.



Johnlery Cruz, 10 yrs old



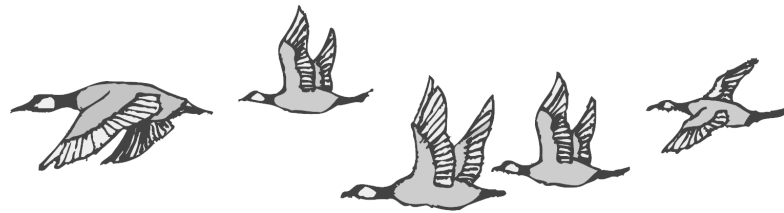
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17. *Environmental Education Compendium for Natural Communities*. California Department of Education, Sacramento, CA. (800) 995-4099 (publications sales unit). 1995.
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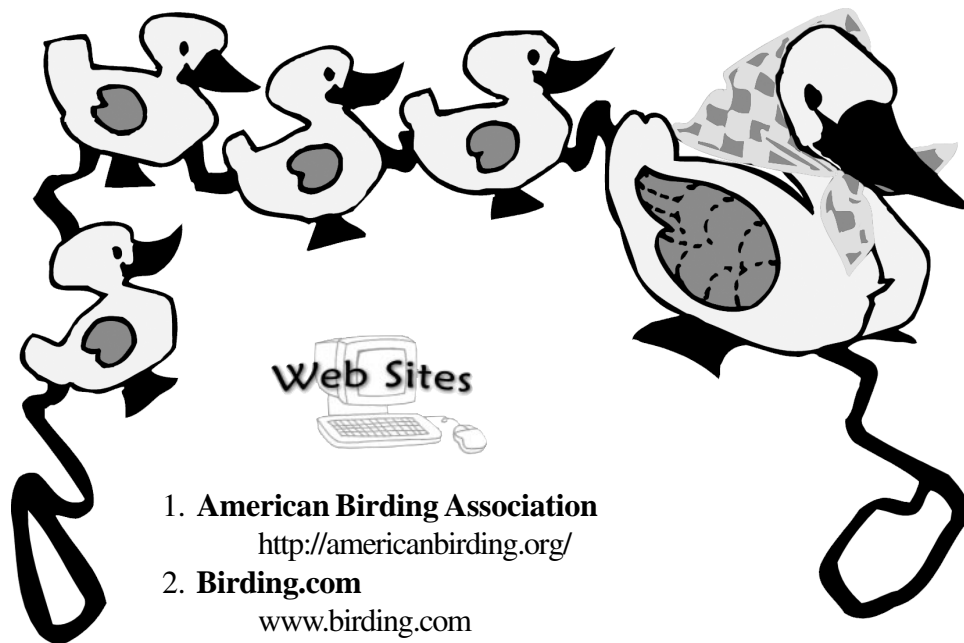


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www.birding.com
3. **CA Department of Fish and Game**
www.dfg.ca.gov
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www.creec.org

5. **California Waterfowl Association**
www.calwaterfowl.org
6. **Central Valley Habitat Joint Venture**
www.mp.usbr.gov/cvhjv
7. **Ducks Unlimited**
www.ducks.org
8. **eNature**
www.enature.com
9. **Interpretive Birding Bulletin**
www.ibirding.com
10. **Junior Duck Stamp Curriculum**
www.calwaterfowl.org/duck_stamp/duck_stamp1.htm
11. **Junior Duck Stamp Entry Information**
<http://duckstamps.fws.gov/jds/jrregs.html>
12. **National Audubon Society California**
www.audubon.org
13. **National Wildlife Federation**
www.nwf.org
14. **National Wildlife Health Center**
www.nwhc.usgs.gov
15. **National Wildlife Refuge System**
<http://bluegoose.arw.r9.fws.gov>
16. **Natural Resources Conservation Service**
www.ms.nrcs.usda.gov/whmi/birds.htm
17. **Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center**
www.npwrc.usgs.gov
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www.thewildlife.net
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